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SUBJECT: BRIEFING PAPER ON RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN EL SALVADOR
CIA AND STATE

1. [REDACTED] SALVADORAN DESK OFFICER [REDACTED]
COMPOSED A BRIEFING PAPER ON RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN EL SALVADOR AT
THE REQUEST OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS, CRAIG JOHNSTONE. THE PAPER IS BASED UPON
[REDACTED] REPORTING BEGINNING IN JANUARY, 1983, AND IS
INTENDED FOR USE DURING A PENDING RESTRICTED INTER-AGENCY GROUP
MEETING ON CENTRAL AMERICA AND WAS SLATED FOR BRIEFING SECRETARY
SCHULTZ PRIOR TO HIS TRAVEL TO EL SALVADOR, NOW POSTPONED.
AMBASSADOR PICKERING WAS INFORMED OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE PAPER
DURING A SECURE VOICE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION [REDACTED] ON 20
OCT. AND HE REQUESTED THAT A COPY BE PROVIDED HIM [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

-----TEAR LINE-----
EL SALVADOR: RIGHT-WING DEATH SQUADS

A SELECTIVE STUDY ON STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION:

VIOLENCE BY THE SALVADORAN RIGHT WING HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN
DIFFICULT TO INVESTIGATE. IT HAS ONLY BEEN WITHIN THE CURRENT
CALENDAR YEAR THAT WE HAVE DEVELOPED GOOD INFORMATION ON THE
STRUCTURE AND INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF SOME OF THE GROUPS INVOLVED.
THIS PAPER SERVES TO CONSOLIDATE THE INFORMATION RECENTLY DEVELOPED
ON RIGHT-WING PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN EL SALVADOR, AND IS INTENDED TO
PROVIDE SOME PERSPECTIVE ON HOW THESE GROUPS FUNCTION WITHIN

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

SALVADORAN SOCIETY.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT A "DEATH SQUAD" IS CONSIDERED TO BE AN EXTRA-OFFICIAL PARAMILITARY GROUP. ITS MEMBERSHIP IS NOT NECESSARILY COMPOSED OF SALVADORAN SECURITY FORCE OR MILITARY PERSONNEL. HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMMITTED IN THE COURSE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, NO MATTER HOW ABHORRENT, ARE NOT "DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES". HENCE UNDER THIS DEFINITION THE EXECUTION OF 18 CIVILIANS IN FEBRUARY 1983 AT THE LAS HOJAS FARM COOPERATIVE IS NOT A DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITY BECAUSE IT WAS PERPETRATED BY AN ARMY UNIT UNDER THE COMMAND OF ITS CAPTAIN.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

THE RIGHTIST PARAMILITARY GROUPS, OR "DEATH SQUADS", ARE DIVERSE IN COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE BUT DO SHARE MANY CHARACTERISTICS. THE GROUPS ARE NOT LARGE; THEY RARELY EXCEED 20 CONCURRENT MEMBERS AND COMMONLY OPERATE IN GROUPS OF 10 OR LESS. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP IN SUCH GROUPS IN EL SALVADOR PROBABLY OSCILATES BETWEEN 100 AND 200. THE SQUADS ARE ESSENTIALLY IMPERMANENT. MOST MEMBERS HAVE OTHER FULL TIME PROFESSIONS AND COALESCE TO PLAN AND EXECUTE TERRORIST ACTS. RANK AND FILE MEMBERSHIP IS FLUID AND SOMETIMES INTERCHANGEABLE, WHILE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ARE MORE PERMANENT. LEADERS OF ONE GROUP ARE LIKELY TO KNOW THE LEADERS OF OTHERS OPERATING IN THE SAME AREA OR AGAINST COMMON TARGETS AND AND DISTINCT GROUPS OCCASIONALLY CONDUCT JOINT OPERATIONS. INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUPS IS TIGHTLY HELD AND ANYONE BETRAYING THEIR TRUST IS SUBJECT TO EXECUTION.

THERE APPEAR TO BE TWO CATEGORIES OF DEATH SQUADS, DIFFERENTIATED BY THE PUBLIC OR CLANDESTINE NATURE OF THEIR OPERATIONS. THE FIRST CATEGORY IS PUBLICITY SEEKING. THEY EMPLOY SELF-STYLED TITLES SUCH AS THE "WHITE WARRIORS UNION", THE "GENERAL MAXIMILIANO HERNANDEZ MARTINEZ ANTI-COMMUNIST BRIGADE", OR THE "SECRET ANTI-COMMUNIST ARMY" AND MAKE A PUBLIC EXAMPLE OF THEIR VICTIMS, WHO ARE OFTEN TORTURED TO DEATH OR EXECUTED, AND DUMPED IN PUBLIC PLACES. THE KILLERS PROCLAIM THEIR WORK WITH COMMUNIQUE OR PLACARDS LEFT WITH THE BODY IDENTIFYING THE RESPONSIBLE SQUAD AND CONTAINING A WARNING TO OTHERS, OR BY CARVING THE NON-SPECIFIC LETTERS "E.M." (THE SPANISH ABBREVIATION OF "DEATH SQUAD") ON THE BODY. THE SECOND TYPE OF DEATH SQUAD USES NO TITLE AND, APART FROM THE EVIDENCE OF TORTURE, LEAVES NO INDICATION OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY. MOST OF THOSE KILLED BY RIGHT-WING DEATH SQUADS APPEAR TO BE VICTIMS OF THIS LATTER TYPE.

OFFICIAL PROTECTION FROM PROSECUTION OR GOVERNMENTAL

INTERFERENCE IS PRIMARILY THE RESULT OF PERSONAL ALLIANCES BETWEEN KEY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND GROUP LEADERS. FEAR OF RETALIATION ALSO MOTIVATES SOME PUBLIC OFFICIALS TO REFRAIN FROM INVESTIGATING OR PROSECUTING GROUP MEMBERS. SOME GOVERNMENT, MILITARY, POLICE, AND SECURITY OFFICIALS PARTICIPATE IN RIGHTIST PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIES, BUT DO SO CLANDESTINELY AND NOT AS PART OF THEIR OFFICIAL FUNCTION OR AS AN EXTENSION OF OFFICIAL POLICY.

TARGETS FOR KIDNAPPING, HOSTILE INTERROGATION, OR TORTURE AND ASSASSINATION ARE MOST COMMONLY REVOLUTIONARY LEFTISTS AND THEIR SYMPATHIZERS AND ASSOCIATES; HOWEVER, VICTIMS ALSO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF RIVAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEATH SQUADS, MODERATE MASS ORGANIZATIONS, "UNDESIRABLE" SOCIAL ELEMENTS SUCH AS DRUG ADDICTS, AND THE PERSONAL ENEMIES OF THE GROUP LEADERS.

THE ACTIVITY OF PUBLICITY SEEKING TERRORIST SQUADS HAS INCREASED IN THE LAST YEAR IN RESPONSE TO A VARIETY OF INFLUENCES. THE NATIONALIST REPUBLIC ALLIANCE (ARENA) AND ITS LEADER ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON, WHOSE INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORISM WILL BE DETAILED BELOW, HAVE CONSOLIDATED THEIR POWER AND NOW FEEL ABLE TO ACT WITH RELATIVE IMPUNITY AGAINST THOSE PERCEIVED TO BE ENEMIES. AT THE SAME TIME, DEMOCRATIC COMPETITORS FOR POWER HAVE IMPROVED THEIR ORGANIZATION, EXPANDED THEIR POLITICAL POWER BASES, AND THREATEN ARENA'S HOLD ON POWER IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. RIGHTISTS ALSO FEEL THREATENED BY "LIBERAL" POLITICAL TRENDS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S AMNESTY PROGRAM, SALVADORAN AND U.S. GOVERNMENTAL DIALOGUE WITH GUERRILLA LEADERS AND SOCIAL/ECONOMIC PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE AGRARIAN REFORM, AND IN RESPONSE THEY HAVE INSTITUTED CAMPAIGNS DESIGNED TO DERAIL THOSE PROGRAMS, PUNISH THOSE IMPLEMENTING CHANGES AND INTIMIDATE OTHERS CONSIDERING LENDING SUPPORT TO THE PROGRAMS. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT LEFTIST TERRORIST ACTIVITY, OFTEN TARGETED ON THE RIGHT, HAS INCREASED IN THE LAST YEAR, AND THE LEFTIST TERROR CAMPAIGN AS WELL AS GUERRILLA SUCCESSES IN THE FIELD HAVE SERVED AS A CATALYST FOR RIGHTIST TERROR.

RIGHTIST DEATH SQUADS:

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PUBLICITY-SEEKING DEATH SQUAD IS THE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL FIRST REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE PARTY (ARENA). THE GROUP WAS ORGANIZED AND IS DIRECTED BY DR. PEDRO REGALADO CUELLAR. REGALADO, A FORMER DENTIST, IS THE CHIEF OF SECURITY AT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES ARE UNDERTAKEN WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND APPROVAL OF ARENA LEADER AND CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON. THIS SQUAD HAS MOST RECENTLY USED THE NAME "SECRET ANTI-COMMUNIST PARTY" (ESA) IN ORDER TO HAVE A PUBLIC FRONT FOR ISSUING COMMUNIQUEs AND THREATENING PEOPLE WHILE COVERING THE TRUE SOURCE OF THE VIOLENCE. THE ESA HAS

EVEN ATTACKED D'AUBUISSON IN ONE OF ITS COMMUNIQUE.

DR. REGALADO, WHO HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH D'AUBUISSON SINCE THE 1970'S, DIRECTS THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES IN CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH D'AUBUISSON. MEMBERSHIP IN ARENA'S DEATH SQUAD VARIES BETWEEN 10 AND 20 INDIVIDUALS, COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY, THE NATIONAL POLICE, THE TREASURY POLICE, AND SELECTED CIVILIANS. THE GROUP ENGAGES IN ASSASSINATION, KIDNAPPING, TORTURE, AND POLITICAL INTIMIDATION. THEIR PRIMARY TARGETS ARE THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT AND MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC), THEIR PRINCIPAL COMPETITORS FOR POLITICAL POWER. THE OPERATIVES SEE THEMSELVES AS VIGILANTES WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT EL SALVADOR IN WAYS THAT THE ARMY CANNOT SINCE THEIR ORDERS "TIE THEIR HANDS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS". ON A POLITICAL LEVEL THE ARENISTAS SEE CIVIL UNREST AS ADVANTAGEOUS FOR THEIR PARTY. THEY PERCEIVE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AS AN ENEMY OF THEIR PARTY ALMOST EQUAL TO THE GUERRILLAS.

A LESS THAN COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ARENA DEATH SQUAD (OR A PREDECESSOR ORGANIZATION SINCE THIS SQUAD MAY NOT HAVE EXISTED PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF ARENA IN OCTOBER 1981 OR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN MARCH 1982) INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

ASSASSINATION OF PDC MAYORS AND PARTY WORKERS PRIOR TO THE MARCH 1982 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION.

PROTECTING THE SERGEANT WHO KILLED EVANGELINA GARCIA, A PDC MAYOR, ALONG WITH HER DAUGHTER ON MAY 29, 1982.

KILLED A SUSPECTED GUERRILLA AND DUMPED HIS BODY IN A SAN SALVADOR HOTEL PARKING LOT ON MAY 6, 1983, ALONG WITH A NOTE THREATENING A PDC ASSEMBLY DELEGATE.

MACHINE-GUNNED PDC HEADQUARTERS IN SAN SALVADOR ON JUNE 7, 1983.

TORTURED AND KILLED TWO SUPPOSED GUERRILLAS WHOSE BODIES WERE FOUND JULY 1, 1983, IN SAN SALVADOR.

SET OFF FOUR BOMBS IN SAN SALVADOR ON SEPTEMBER 6, 1983. THE BOMBS WHICH CAUSED NO INJURIES WERE SET OFF IN THE CAR OF LABOR LEADER JORGE RUIZ CAMACHO, THE HOMES OF SUPPOSED GUERRILLA SYMPATHIZERS ITALO LOPEZ VALLECILLO AND SOME JESUIT PRIESTS, AND THE CLINIC OF DR. HERNANDEZ VIZCARRA.

BLEW UP A PRINTING SHOP ON OCTOBER 11, 1983.

THE ARENA PARAMILITARY GROUP IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN A CAMPAIGN OF KIDNAPPING, INTERROGATING AND KILLING LEFTIST ACTIVISTS. THEIR FORCED CONFESSIONS PROVIDE LEADS TO ADDITIONAL TERRORIST TARGETS. RECENTLY THE ARENA SQUAD HAS TARGETED PDC LEADER ANTONIO MORALES EHFELICH AND CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DELEGATE MAURICIO MAZIER ANDINO. ARENA LEADER D'AUBUISSON IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN APPROVING THE MARCH 24, 1980, ASSASSINATION OF ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO.

TYPICALLY SUSPECTED GUERRILLAS ARE EXECUTED AFTER INTERROGATION. INFORMATION GAINED IN THE INTERROGATIONS IS SHARED WITH THE SECURITY FORCES, WHICH SOMETIMES BASE THEIR ACTIONS AGAINST INDIVIDUALS OR FACILITIES, SUCH AS SAFEHOUSES, SOLELY UPON CONFESSIONS MADE UNDER DURESS.

THERE IS LITTLE INFORMATION CONCERNING FUNDING OF THE ARENA DEATH SQUAD. D'AUBUISSON IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING IN 1982 TO FINANCE THE PARTY AND POSSIBLY THE PARAMILITARY GROUP. OTHER MONEY COMES FROM SELLING WEAPONS, DONATIONS FROM THE OLIGARCHY IN-COUNTRY OR ABROAD, AND POSSIBLY FROM MURDER FOR HIRE.

THE ARENA DEATH SQUAD OCCASIONALLY OPERATES IN COOPERATION WITH A SQUAD COMPOSED PRIMARILY BY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE. CONTACT WITH THIS GROUP IS NORMALLY CONDUCTED THROUGH NATIONAL POLICE DETECTIVE SIGIFREDO PEREZ LINARES AND ARENA CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEPUTY OSCAR MENDEZ. THESE INTERMEDIARIES PASS INFORMATION TO DR. REGALADO WHO IN TURN DEALS WITH D'AUBUISSON.

NATIONAL POLICE:

A DEATH SQUAD WHICH TENDS TO AVOID HIGH PROFILE OPERATIONS HAS EXISTED WITHIN THE NATIONAL POLICE SINCE AT LEAST LATE 1979. IT IS THIS SQUAD WHICH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO. THE LEADER OF THE SQUAD AT THAT TIME WAS CAPT. AMILCAR MOLINA PANAMENO. OTHERS REPORTEDLY INVOLVED IN THAT ASSASSINATION ARE DETECTIVE SIGIFREDO PEREZ LINARES, INSPECTOR MISAEL RIVAS ROMERO, JOSE LUIS ALAS ROMERO, LUIS RODRIGUEZ, AND ONE FNU SANTIN. MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE PARAMILITARY GROUP ARE DRAWN FROM THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION SECTION, THE SPECIAL POLITICAL INVESTIGATION SECTION, AND THE NARCOTICS CONTROL SECTION. THE CURRENT HEAD OF THE SQUAD IS LTC. ARISTEDES MARQUEZ, CHIEF OF DETECTIVES AND HEAD OF THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT.

LTC. MARQUEZ'S INFORMAL LIAISON WITH D'AUBUISSON AND DR. REGALADO IS MAINTAINED THROUGH DETECTIVE PEREZ AND ARENA DEPUTY

ESCAPE MENDED. THIS MECHANISM IS USED TO PROVIDE THE ARENA LEADERS WITH WARNINGS OF PENDING INVESTIGATIONS OF THEIR PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIES, AND TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, MARQUEZ PREVENTS SUCH INVESTIGATIONS FROM PROCEEDING. ALSO SUPPORTIVE OF ARENA DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES, AND HIMSELF A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL POLICE PARAMILITARY SQUAD, IS LTC. RENE EMILIO PONCE, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL POLICE TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT. PONCE HAS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO REGALADO AND HIS TEAM IN THE ACQUISITION AND DOCUMENTATION OF VEHICLES USED IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. THE NATIONAL POLICE HAVE ALSO PROVIDED WEAPONS TO SUPPORT ARENA PARAMILITARY OPERATIONS.

IN ADDITION TO OCCASIONALLY JOINING IN ON ACTIONS, THE NATIONAL POLICE DEATH SQUAD COOPERATES WITH REGALADO'S GROUP IN THE JOINT OPERATION OF THE CLANDESTINE PRISON IN THE ESCALON SECTION OF SAN SALVADOR, WHICH IS SUPERVISED BY NATIONAL POLICE OFFICER RAFAEL LOPEZ DAVILA.

CURRENT OR RECENT MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE DEATH SQUAD INCLUDE INSPECTOR MISAEL RIVAS ROMERO, THE SQUAD TACTICAL LEADER, AS WELL AS ISMAEL PARADA CACERES, JOSE ROBERTO RECINOS MARROQUIN, EFRAIN LARIOS MONROY, CARLOS ALVARADO GOMEZ, AND MARIO SAUL MERINO ESCOBAR.

NATIONAL GUARD:

A NATIONAL GUARD DEATH SQUAD HAS OPERATED SINCE AT LEAST 1981. CAPT. EDUARDO ALFONSO AVILA AND RODOLFO ISIDRO LOPEZ SIBRIAN, MEMBERS OF THE SQUAD, WERE CONSPIRATORS IN THE MURDER OF SALVADORAN RODOLFO VIERA AND U.S. LABOR ADVISORS MARK PEARLMAN AND MICHAEL HAMMER AT THE SHERATON HOTEL IN SAN SALVADOR IN JANUARY 1981. THE LEADER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD PARAMILITARY GROUP AT THE TIME OF THOSE ASSASSINATIONS WAS THEN MAJOR MARIO DENIS MORAN, FORMER HEAD OF THE NATIONAL GUARD INTELLIGENCE UNIT. SOME OF THE FINANCING FOR THIS GROUP WAS PROVIDED THROUGH RICARDO SOL MESA, A SALVADORAN BUSINESSMAN AND OLIGARCH FAMILY MEMBER.

CAPTAIN EDUARDO AVILA HAS BEEN LIVING IN EXILE, AND THOUGH LEGALLY SUBJECT TO ARREST ON A CHARGE OF DESERTION, HE IS A FRIEND OF AND UNDER THE PROTECTION OF ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON. OTHER RIGHT-WING MILITARY OFFICERS WITH LINKS TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES ARE LOYAL TO AVILA. AVILA RECENTLY RETURNED TO EL SALVADOR CLANDESTINELY WITH THE AID OF SYMPATHIZERS IN THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE AND LIVED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD. AMONG THE VISITORS AVILA RECEIVED ON THIS TRIP WERE ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON, LTC ROBERTO STABEN, PROBABLY MEMBER OF RIGHTIST DEATH SQUAD "WHITE WARRIORS UNION", MAJ ENZO GUILLERMO RUBIO, NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF IN

SANTA ANA, LTC ARISTIDES MARQUEZ, HEAD OF THE NATIONAL POLICE DEATH SQUAD, CPT RAFAEL LOPEZ DAVILA, SUPERVISOR OF THE NATIONAL POLICE SECRET PRISON, CPT FRANCISCO MORAN RECINOS, TREASURY POLICE OFFICER, LTC JOAQUIN ZACAPA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF MILITARY DETACHMENT 2 (THE UNIT INVOLVED IN THE LAS HOJAS MASSACRE), LTC RENE EMILIO PONTE, NATIONAL POLICE DEATH SQUAD MEMBER, LT RODOLFO ISIDOR LOPEZ SIBRIAN, WHO ALONG WITH AVILA ORDERED THE KILLINGS IN THE SHERATON MURDERS, LTC MARIO DENIS MORAN, LEADER OF RECENTLY ORGANIZED DEATH SQUAD IN THE ARMED FORCES ENGINEERING CENTER (WHICH MAY USE THE NAME GENERAL MAXIMILLIANO HERNANDEZ MARTINEZ ANTI-COMMUNIST BRIGADE). THE VISITORS PROBABLY ALL REPRESENT MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE RIGHT-WING TERRORIST SUBCULTURE OF EL SALVADOR.

ADDITIONAL DEATH SQUADS:

THE GROUPS DISCUSSED ABOVE ARE BUT SOME OF THE DEATH SQUADS OPERATING IN EL SALVADOR. THERE IS FRAGMENTARY REPORTING WHICH STRONGLY INDICATES THE EXISTENCE OF A DEATH SQUAD OPERATING WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE TREASURY POLICE AND OTHERS UNDENIABLY EXIST IN THE CIVILIAN SECTOR. THERE APPEARS TO BE RIVALRY AMONG SOME OF THESE GROUPS; THE ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE ARENA SQUAD AND THE TREASURY POLICE HAS INCLUDED KIDNAPPINGS AND EXECUTIONS.

RIGHT-WING TERROR IN CULTURAL CONTEXT:

DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITY IS DEEPLY INGRAINED IN SALVADORAN SOCIETY, AND TO VARYING DEGREES IN ALL CENTRAL AMERICAN SOCIETIES AND MEXICO, WITH COSTA RICA AS A POSSIBLE EXCEPTION. THE ACTIVITY IS REFLECTIVE OF SOCIAL TURMOIL AND OF WEAK AND CORRUPT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS. THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONALIZED AUTHORITY AND RELIABLE LEGAL SYSTEMS HAS ENCOURAGED THE PERSISTENCE OF "CAUDILLISMO", LOCAL RULE BY STRONG-MEN WHO FUNCTION AUTONOMOUSLY AND, WHEN NECESSARY, MAINTAIN THEIR DOMINANCE BY FORCE THROUGH THE USE OF ARMED SECURITY SQUADS.

IN EL SALVADOR SOME OF THE CADRE OF PRESENT DAY RIGHT-WING TERRORIST GROUPS WERE PROBABLY DRAWN FROM THE RANKS OF ORDEN, A CAMPESINO BASED LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION SYSTEM THAT FLOURISHED UNDER GEN. MADRANO IN THE 1960S. ORDEN EFFECTIVELY INSTITUTIONALIZED VIGILANTEISM AND GREW UP NATURALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL SALVADORAN VIOLENCE, WHICH IS CLASSICALLY EXEMPLIFIED BY THE RUTHLESS REPRESSION OF A PEASANT REBELLION IN THE 1930S THAT INVOLVED THE LOSS OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES.

SALVADORAN SOCIETY IS UNDERGOING FORCED CHANGE, AND AMONG THOSE WHO ARE THE MOST RESISTENT TO THAT CHANGE ARE MANY MEMBERS OF THE ECONOMIC OLIGARCHY WHO WERE PREVIOUSLY ACCUSTOMED TO MANIPULATING

THE MILITARY, LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVILEGE. THAT OLIGARCHY, IN RESIDENCE OR IN EXILE, CONTINUES TO MANIPULATE MILITARY OFFICERS. MANY OF THEM MEMBERS OF THE DEATH SQUADS, TO RETARD OR REVERSE THE SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAM IN TRAIN IN EL SALVADOR. THEIR SUPPORT OF RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IS IMPORTANT, BUT NOT CRUCIAL. THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR SUPPORT IS BEST UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF INFLUENCE UPON KEY MILITARY OFFICERS, RATHER THAN IN TERMS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES. THE ACTUAL FUNCTIONING OF THE SQUADS APPEARS TO REQUIRE QUITE LIMITED FUNDS.

THE SALVADORAN MILITARY HAS AN ESPECIALLY WELL-DEVELOPED SENSE OF OFFICER CORPS SOLIDARITY WHICH INCORPORATES AN ETHOS OF SILENCE WITH REGARDS TO WRONGS COMMITTED BY FELLOW OFFICERS, PARTICULARLY BY MILITARY SCHOOL CLASSMATES. MILITARY OFFICERS ROTATE THROUGH THE HIGH ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS OF ALL THE SALVADORAN SECURITY SERVICES. WHEN RIGHTIST TERRORIST ACTIVITIES BECOME THE SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION, THE RESULT IN MOST CASES IS MILITARY OFFICERS CHARGED WITH INVESTIGATING OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS. EVEN IF THERE IS NO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUSPECT AND THE INVESTIGATOR, THE MILITARY CODE OF LOYALTY MAKES IT DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE INVESTIGATOR TO PROCEED AGAINST A FELLOW OFFICER.

IN THOSE UNUSUAL CASES WHERE A COMBINATION OF INFLUENCES BRINGS AN INVESTIGATION TO THE POINT OF THE OFFICER'S DISMISSAL FROM THE MILITARY AND THE INDICTMENT OF RIGHTIST TERRORIST IN THE CIVILIAN COURTS, THERE REMAINS THE OBSTACLE OF A WEAK AND INTIMIDATED CIVIL JUDICIARY. JUDGES, WITNESSES, AND JURIES ARE THE OBJECTS OF CREDIBLE DEATH THREATS. VERY FEW SALVADORANS HAVE BEEN WILLING TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES TO GRAVE RISK WHILE ASSISTING IN THE PROSECUTION OF A RIGHTIST FOR AN INDIVIDUAL ACT OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED IN A SOCIETY PERMEATED BY MASS VIOLENCE.

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